

# SAFE BET WINES

*In the world of consumer-fuelled abundance of wine in the marketplace, choosing 'the right one' might seem intimidating. This article is an easy 'cheat-sheet', to help you sift through the overwhelming number of products to always pick a good bottle.*



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I want to talk to you about 'safe bet' wines, or how to make an educated choice and buy a good bottle even if you don't know much about wine.

In the wine industry we always hear people say that good wine starts in the vineyard, therefore a good thing to consider is regionality. Grape varieties perform differently under varying climate conditions, so when choosing a wine, you'll want a bottle from a region where that particular grape performs well. Here are the top five varietals in Australia, with two regions each where those grape vines perform well.

## SAUVIGNON BLANC

The most consumed Sauv Blanc in Australia actually comes from New Zealand, and there's a good reason for it – NZ has a unique climate and soil composition that helps Sauvignon Blanc vines thrive, which results in a great quality wine. But if you're like me and like to support the local wine industry, a great region for Sauv Blanc in Australia is Adelaide Hills. These wines are floral on the nose and have passionfruit notes on the palate, which I absolutely love! Sauvignon Blancs are also the wine you want to drink young – the fresher the better – so don't fall into the trap of buying an aged bottle because going for the current vintage will always be the safest bet.

## CHARDONNAY

Chardonnay is a flagship variety for Yarra Valley Wine Region and are known to take out a number of global awards yearly.

Margaret River is another great wine region for chardonnay, and while it is fairly small, accounting for just three per cent of Australia's grape production, it takes up about 20 per cent of the country's premium wine market due to the saturation of quality wine producers in the region. Depending on the production style, most chardonnays can take a bit of ageing, so I would recommend going for vintages anywhere from 3-7 years old.

## PINOT NOIR

I love Pinot Noir for its versatility. It goes well

with a cheese platter, vegetarian dishes, duck, pork, spicy Asian dishes – there's a lot of things you can have with a pinot and you won't go wrong. Being on the delicate side, Pinot Noir likes cooler climates, which is why my favourites come from Mornington Peninsula and Tasmania.

While Pinot Noirs are lighter reds and can be enjoyed young, they can still benefit from some age. My favourite age is about 4-5 years, when the jammy and savoury fruit characteristics are at their peaks.

## SHIRAZ

Shiraz is a cool grape variety that's adaptable and versatile so performs well across different climate conditions. In fact, in challenging regions, Shiraz is sometimes used as 'root-stock', with other varieties grafted on, due to its resilience to disease and climatic variations.

There are two main styles Shiraz is made in, the cool-climate French style, which is often

referred to as 'Syrah', and the hot-climate juicy Shiraz in true Australian spirit. While Shiraz is definitely a great wine to taste from many regions, my favourites would have to be Barossa Valley and McLaren Vale.

A quality Shiraz is a great candidate for ageing, and while most don't make it to that age in my house, 10-15 years would be the ultimate drinking age for the big boys.

## CABERNET SAUVIGNON

The juiciest of them all, Cab Sauv loves sunshine, hot summer afternoons, and cooler nights. Coastal regions like Coonawarra in South Australia and the Great Southern in WA provide that in spades.

Similar to Shiraz, Cab Sauv keeps on giving with age, and while some producers will claim their Cabernet will keep on developing well into their 20s, on a more practical note I would suggest Cab Sauvs that are at least 5 years old.

### Up to Taste!

**Shaw + Smith Sauvignon Blanc 2020 — \$29**  
Shaw and Smith has quite a reputation for quality when it comes to fine wine production. For them it's about the whole experience — the look, feel, and taste. Their Sauv Blanc is one of the best examples of this variety from Adelaide Hills. The golden yellow colour is harmonious with the labelling, and notes of freshly cut grass and passionfruit hit you when you smell the glass. The palate is light, but fruitful, with notes of white peaches, passion fruit and lemon. It's a delight on a warm summer's day!

**SOUMAH Equilibrio Chardonnay 2018 — \$80**  
Having just won the 'Best in Show' at the biggest global wine competition in London, the Decanter World Wine Awards, this chardonnay is a special drop. The straw yellow with a green tinge colour is seductive at first sight. Gentle notes of field flowers and blood orange open up to a gentle scent of struck match, vanilla and roasted almonds and while complex to perfection the palate is youthful, which is persistent with signature Yarra Valley minerality and the creamy finish leaves you longing for another sip.

**Tamar Ridge Pinot Noir 2018 — \$34**  
What a vibrant red colour! This wine

impresses with looks before you even get close. Aromas are filled with cherries, dark chocolate and notes of liquorice, and a complementing palate of cranberries, black cherries and a hint of white pepper at the end. This is the kind of wine you can drink by itself, with a cheese platter or even Anji's steak ranchero — the possibilities are endless.

**Elderton Estate Family Vineyards Shiraz 2017 — \$30**

At three years old, this shiraz is a lively dark purple with a rich array of dark berries aromas followed by chocolate and vanilla tones. The palate starts with a fresh and juicy plum, smoothly replaced by notes of chocolate and Italian spices with a firm and persistent finish.

**Forest Hill Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2018 — \$32**

The crimson colour speaks for this wine's young age, but don't be fooled by its youth, this wine packs a punch! Feel like going for a forest walk? Well, this wine might just take you there with its aromas of forest floor leaves followed by fresh cassis and mix of Mediterranean spices. The palate is medium to full bodied, long and diverse backed by fine tannin structure, hints of blackberries and raspberries. 